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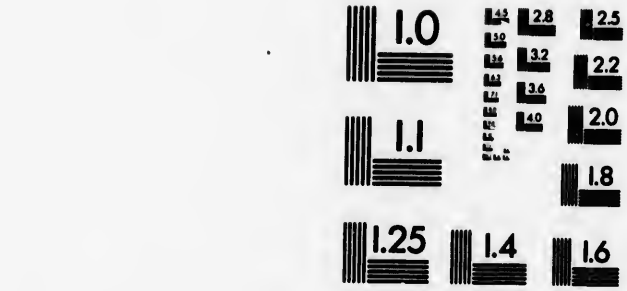

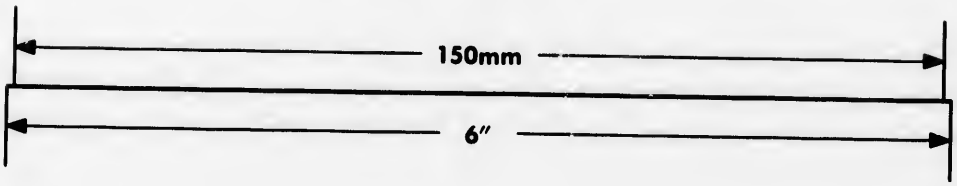

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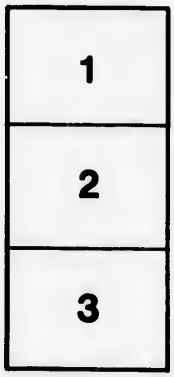

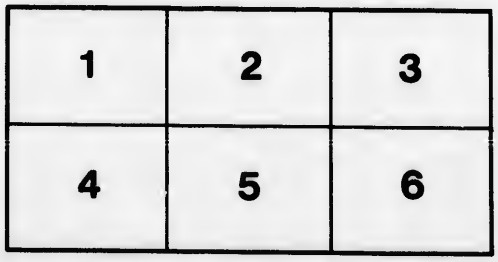

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THE WABIGOON COUNTRY,

RAINY RIVER DISTRICT.

ONTARIO DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
TORONTO, APRIL 1, 1898.

THE PROGRESS OF THE SETTLEMENT AT DRYDEN.

Since the spring of 1896, when the Department first called attention to the agriculture possibilities of the Wabigoon country, the progress of the settlement at Dryden has been continuous and satisfactory. Originally, two townships only were surveyed, Van Horne and Wainwright, but the demand for land was such that from time to time it was found necessary to make additional surveys, and the townships of Eton, Rugby, Sanford and Aubrey were added to the west, and Zealand to the east.

In Eton and Rugby, which were placed on the market last season, a considerable portion of the available land has already been taken up. The characteristics of the townships of Sandford and Aubrey are precisely similar to those already settled. The land is rather rolling throughout, and the soil, for the most part, a clay or clay loam of very good quality. The timber being small, and recently burned over, the land is easily cleared, in fact there are large areas almost fit for the plow at the present time, as the timber has been burned off almost clean and the land is growing up with wild peas, wild buckwheat, grass, and some small bushes. The Wabigoon river runs through Sanford from east to west, while a part of Eagle lake and river is included in the township of Aubrey. In these two townships rock outcrops very seldom, and taken altogether they may be considered as very desirable for settlement. The Canadian Pacific Railway runs along the line dividing the townships, Sanford being in the north and Aubrey to the south of the track.

The Township of Zealand embraces the whole of the north shore of lake Wabigoon, except that portion included in Van Horne. The soil is clay with rock outcropping in places, and it is inclined to be sandy in the northerly concessions. The rank growth of alders and berry bushes in the clearings speaks well for its fertility. The township is timbered with small growing timber, which is not difficult to clear. The C.P.R. runs through the township, skirting the north shore of the lake.

Up to the present time, about 25,000 acres of land have been sold, and the population of the settlement in and around Dryden, is between five and six hundred people. Enquiries regarding the country are still numerous.

The land is sold by the Government at fifty cents per acre, to actual settlers only, payable one third down and the balance in three annual instalments. The settlement duties consist of clearing and putting under cultivation one tenth of the land taken up, building a habitable house not less than 16x20 feet, and residing thereon for at least six months in each year for three years, or for two years continiously. Each male person over eighteen years of age may purchase 160 acres; but a man, with children under eighteen years of age is allowed 240 acres.

The development of the town of Dryden, which is the centre of the settlement, has been very marked during the past year. At the end of April, 1897, about 75 town plots had been disposed of, and eighteen or twenty buildings erected. Since then, the number of plots sold has increased to 122 and the buildings to 75, showing that building operations have been carried forward with considerable energy.

The town has now two hotels, three boarding houses, a railway station, telegraph office, express office, post office, a public library and reading room, and a good school house, with seventy scholars on the roll.

Two saw mills are in operation, and there is a probability of a brick yard being started, the clay in the vicinity making excellent brick. The town also has a doctor, a land surveyor, a magistrate and a constable.

The price of provisions is very reasonable. Among the businesses established there, are four general stores, four flour and feed stores, three butchers, three wood dealers, two blacksmiths, a hardware, a furniture and undertaking, a boot and shoe, and a drug store. Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian services are held every Sunday.

A bridge and a dam have been built by the Government across the Wabigoon river at Dryden. The Government has also built about twenty miles of colonization road, which the settlers have supplemented by as much more. Park and cemetery lots have also been laid out adjacent to the town.

The situation of Dryden, at the angle formed where the C.P.R. crosses the Wabigoon river, is very advantagious and attractive. The town has a large amount of farm land at its back, besides having the additional advantage of communication by water with the gold fields now being developed in the vicinity. The river is from a few rods to an eighth of a mile in width, with

a depth of about twenty feet, and is the only outlet from lake Wabigoon. Between Dryden and lake Wabigoon, a distance of about a mile and a-half, it is navigable for steam boats; and a steam tug plied there during the season of 1897.

The price of town lots varies from $10 to $25 according to location, and they may be secured under the following conditions:

1. Not more than two lots can be sold to any one individual.

2. Purchaser must erect a habitable house not less than 16x20 feet.

3. Parties shall become actual residents within six months from time of taking possession.

The terms of purchase are cash, and there are no fees of any description.

Applications for the purchase of land should be made to A. E. Annis, Crown Lands Agent, Dryden, Ont.

Lake Wabigoon, which connects with the Manitou chain of lakes, is a beautiful sheet of water about forty miles long and varying from one to six miles in width.

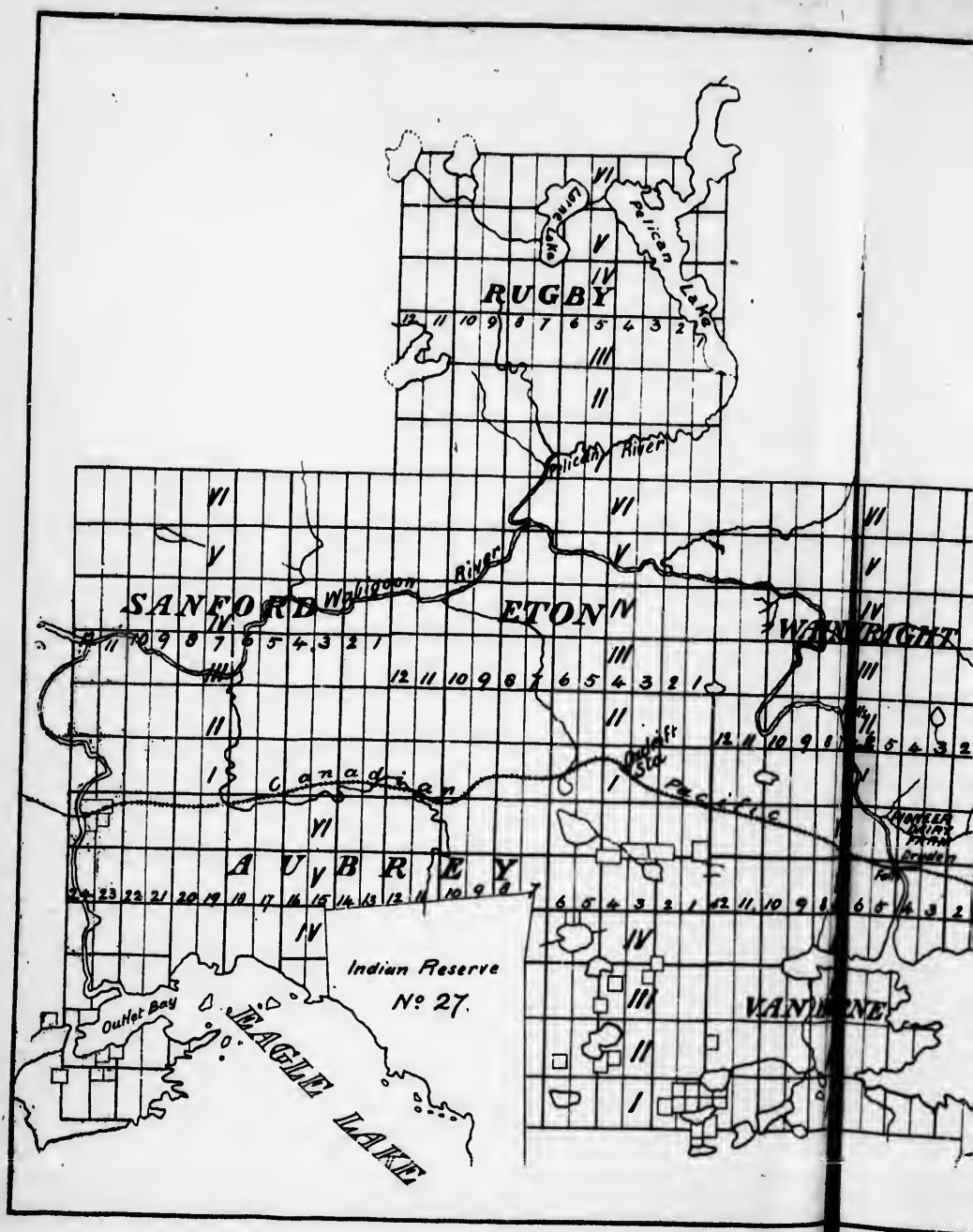
The Department again desires to call attention to the water power at Dryden, which has not yet been utilized. This power should make the town an excellent site for a customs stamp mill for gold ores, provided the mines in the vicinity continue to develop well, or for a flour mill and other industries.

As regards gold mining, a large number of locations have been taken up within four or five miles of Dryden, and the development work hitherto done has been accompanied with gratifying results. One location within a mile of the town has been purchased by an English company. A large number of locations have also been taken up at Wabigoon, at the eastern end of the lake. Mining development on the Manitous, beleived to be one of the richest sections of the Rainy River District, is also making some progress, and the field is likely to advance more rapidly now that road and steam boat communication is being supplied.

In summer these mining camps afford the settlers an excellent home market for their produce, and will continue to do so to an increasing extent. In winter the lumber and railway tie camps afford a market equally good.

For sheep raising, dairying, stock raising and vegetable growing, the country is exceedingly well adapted, and the market for such products is excellent. During the summer of 1897 butter brought from 20c. to 25c. per pound, and eggs about the same price per dozen. Timothy and clover grow very luxuriantly. Sheep do well owing to the rolling character of the land and the rich natural pasture.

Mr. Annis, the Superintendent of the Government Pioneer Farm, reports the following yields for the season of 1897: Potatoes, 400 bushels per acre; barley, 30 bushels; wheat, 15 bushels. During 1896, fall wheat yielded from 20 to 25 bushels per acre and spring wheat 20 bushels. Mr. Annis states, "Nothing has been hurt by summer frosts during the two seasons I have been here. . . .

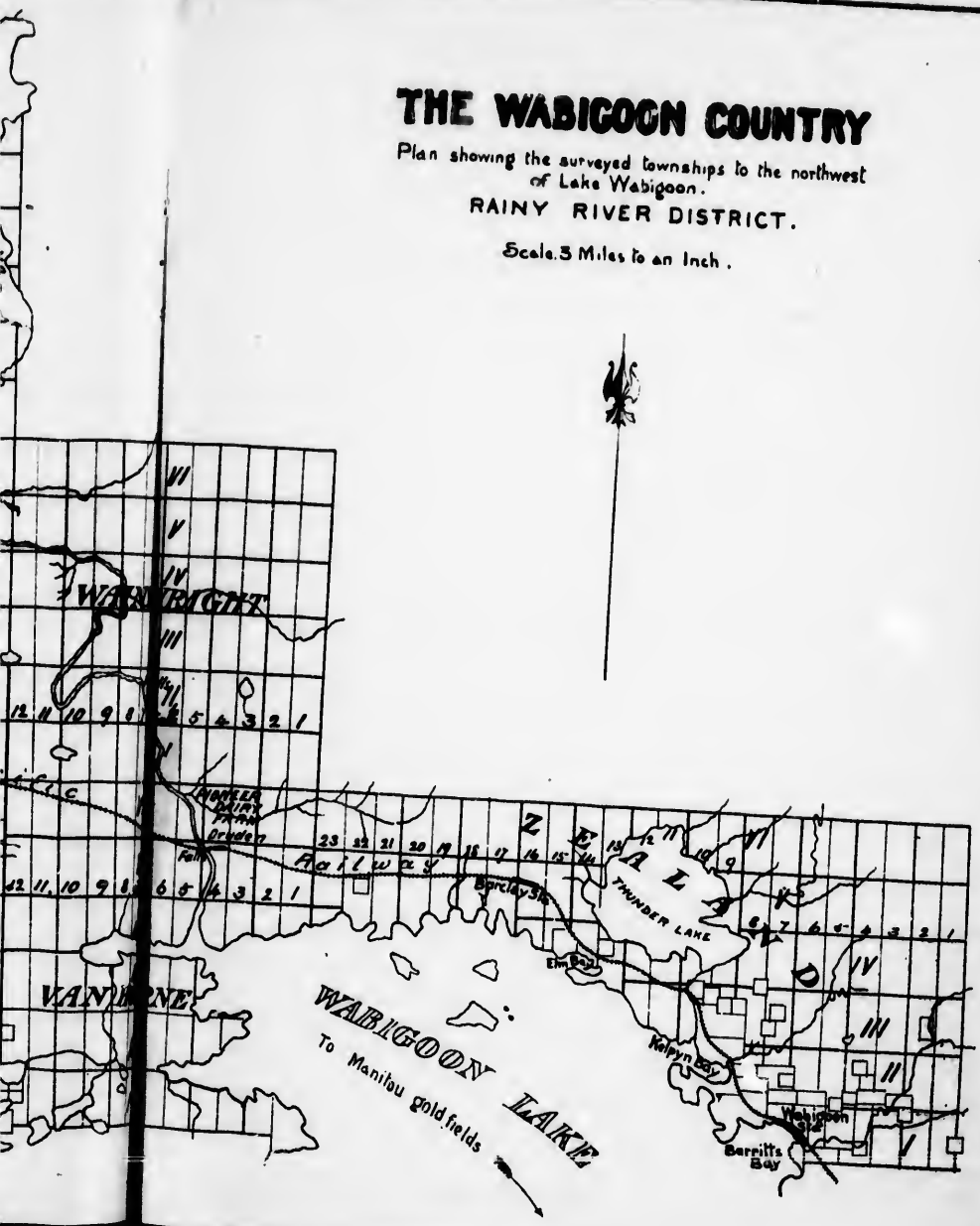

RUGBY
Little Lake
Pelican Lake
Pelican River
SANFORD
Wabigoon River
ETON
WRIGHT
Canadian Pacific
Dept Sta
PIONEER DAIRY FARM
AUBREY
Indian Reserve
No. 27.
Outlet Bay
EAGLE LAKE
VANDINE

THE WABIGOON COUNTRY

Plan showing the surveyed townships to the northwest of Lake Wabigoon.

RAINY RIVER DISTRICT.

Scale. 3 Miles to an Inch.



"This is the place for a man with small capital and lots of pluck and industry to make a home for himself."

It seems to be conceded by all that the climate is a distinctly agreeable one. Although the winters are cold, they are better for working outdoors than they are in the east, as there is hardly any wind and blizzards are unknown.

During the winter of 1897-8, settlers were able to obtain remunerative work at home, cutting and shipping wood to Winnipeg. For the three months, November, December, and January, 240 car loads or 2,400 cords were shipped from Dryden.

Dryden is situated on the main line of the C. P. R. eighty miles east of Rat Portage and 217 miles west of Port Arthur. The distance from Toronto via. North Bay is a little more than one thousand miles. The traveller may take either the all rail route, or go by boat to Fort William and thence by rail. Rates may be obtained from the C. P. R. passenger agent at Toronto.

The following letters, which have been received by the Department from some of the earlier settlers, speak for themselves:

"I and my family were among the first to take up farms and move into this district. We were old pioneers, and expected the usual difficulties in beginning in a new unsettled district, and as a matter of course we found rough roads and " mud that is mud " and flies. But the pioneer who can't stand this had better hold down any soft snap he may find in the east.

In all my pioneering, covering some fifty years (and all of it successful pioneering) I have found fewer difficulties and more natural advantages here at Dryden than in any other farming part of the Dominion.

Our work in clearing here is play compared with early days in Frontenac and Hastings, and fighting flies is only fun here compared with the same job in Grey or Bruce in 1855, and mosquitoes in Manitoba in 1873!

Parts of Manitoba may be more desirable than this for the first few years, but to make a big showing for the capital, especially if that capital is largely bone and sinew, energy and patience, I would say come to Dryden. This is safe advice for anyone and everyone who wishes to clear and trim up and build up a valuable beautiful home that money will not buy after a very few years of patience and toil.

No amount of sitting around or long yarns count here, or in any new country, but industry does, and industry alone is to be preferred to capital alone, but industry and capital prudently applied should run up in value certainly and very rapidly. Good land near the biggest, busiest railroad in America, at fifty cents per acre, can double in price three times and not be dear land then.

The climate at Dryden equals Manitoba, probably a little milder in winter and entirely free from blizzards, and in summer not so dry. Our virgin soil is very rich and free from noxious weeds, and municipal or other mortgages. Our land is very cheaply put under cultivation, free from stumps and stones. A larger part of it is chiefly prairie land. I did a large stretch last fall for less than I ever did prairie land, and have it in better condition.

Clover jumps into life on the slightest reasonable invitation, and makes immense crops of hay and pasture. All these things are well worth seeing, and must be seen to be fully appreciated, and can be seen without any telescope.

I prize and value my farm near Dryden very much, and expect at very moderate expense to make it one of the most attractive and profitable spots on Wabigoon river.

An extension of the Colonization road passing my farm will open up many a desirable homestead north of the river and around Pelican lake.

G. M. YEOMANS."

"We came into this section with two car loads of settlers' effects on the latter part of April, 1897, having previously located on the third concession of Wainwright. We put in about seven acres of crop. Oats were sown on the 26th of May, on freshly plowed land, and were a better crop than I ever had in the county of Grey. Peas were sown on 25th of May; some pods contained as many as eight to ten peas. Our potatoes were put in on about June 1st on land which had only been once plowed. We think they went fully 200 bushels per acre. We put up our buildings and cleared about twenty-five acres of land last year and cut out two miles of road. There has been plenty of work at good wages both for men and team all winter. We are well satisfied with the country. There are no rolling stone on our land and we have come to the conclusion that we have not half of the hard labor we had in the east to carry on our farm. Our sheep and cattle have done well on the wild pasture. There is a big opening here for good industrious men to make a home for themselves.

FERDINAND ROBTKA,
GUSTAVE ROBTKA."

"Having been here now for two summers and one winter, can truly say that I like the climate here along the Wabigoon lake and river very well, and testify that my family have enjoyed better health here than in the more southern part of this Province of Ontario.

Since this country was opened up for settlement two years ago it has made rapid progress, both as regards farm improvement and the building up of a thriving business centre at Dryden, where the farmers and others can secure mostly everything they require at a reasonable rate and sell their produce at a good figure.

We have also been fortunate in securing the erection of a good school-house and such Sabbath school and church services as would put to shame places of three times the size of Dryden.

As regards the land here, most of it is very easily cleared compared to the heavily timbered land in the east, but requires to be thoroughly worked on account of its having been burned over, although some have secured a very fair crop from the first plowing, and expect in a few years to surprise the natives by the amount and variety of crops that can be grown here to advantage.

Although we enjoy many advantages for a new place, still we are all satisfied that there is lots of hard work before us ere we get our farms cleared and fenced, besides the erection of suitable buildings to make it home-like, not to mention fighting flies and mosquitos in the summer, but it is well to find out early in life that nothing of value can be gained without more or less of a struggle.

J. W. HATCH."

"As I was one of the early settlers of this Wabigoon country, I wish to make a few remarks regarding the same. We have had two very nice winters, no great storms like we had in the county of Bruce. The summer of ninety-six was very wet and the summer of ninety-seven very dry, but withal we had a fair crop. No matter when you sow clover and timothy here, from April till September, you will get a good catch of grass. This I have got. On my farm I got a fair crop of oats, although it was dry weather, and I also had a good crop of potatoes where I had worked up my land for them. Now, sir, I verily believe that our wild grass and wild peas here are a great deal stronger than the clover and timothy are down east, because I killed two head of cattle last fall off the grass that were fatter than anything I had ever killed off the grass before coming here, and I see the sheep are the same way as far as condition is concerned. We have a very healthy climate here. My family and myself like this Western Ontario far better than the eastern part. The town site of Dryden is nicely located on the banks of Wabigoon river, and the town is growing very fast and a man can get anything he needs here if he has the wherefore with him.

JAMES HUTCHISON, J.P."

"It is now nearly two years since I landed in this place which was then almost a wilderness. The log house and frame barn on the Pioneer farm being the only buildings here. Since then our town has made rapid progress.

Being the first to take up land in this place, I selected the half section adjoining the Pioneer farm and have about thirty-five acres cleared and fenced. Last season the crops were not as good as I would wish, but my crop being all sown on the first plowing and the season being a very dry and unfavorable one it was not to be wondered at. Just across the fence Mr. Annis' crops were very good, showing plainly that this heavy clay soil needs more thorough cultivation. In a few years when our farmers get their land cleared and the flies and mosquitos killed off, I see no reason why they cannot make a comfortable home here. I like the climate here, and am enjoying better health at present than I have had for a number of years past.

S. W. HATCH."

"I have resided here for the last twelve months and I am highly pleased with the country and climate. The different crops grown did very well considering the dryness of the season. The samples of grain could not be excelled in any country, and for clover it is immense. I think it is a good country for a man with a small capital, as the land is cheap and easily cleared. There is plenty of timber for fuel and building purposes and easy of access.

J. F. MCMILLAN."